(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) France has supported India's candidature for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. In its most recent public statements, it has been stated that India has a rightful place in any expanded Security Council. India has welcomed France's support to its candidature and looks forward to working with it towards the achievement of this objective.

Representations of Cultural groups of Assam under programmes of ICCR

2337. DR. (SMT.) JOYASREE GOSWAMI MAHANTA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether cultural groups of Assam have been given adequate representations in various overseas programmes of Indian Council for Cultural Relations;

(b) the number of groups from Assam that were sent abroad under such programmes during 1997-98, 1998-99 and 1999-2000; and

(c) whether any cultural groups from Assam and the North-East have been selected for performance abroad as part of Indian Republic's Golden Jubilee Celebrations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) Yes, Madam.

(b) List of groups from Assam sponsored / deputed by the ICCR is enclosed as statement (*See* below).

(c) Details of cultural troupes (including those from Assam and the North East) being selected for performances abroad as part of Indian Republic Golden Jubilee Celebrations in the financial year 2000- 2001 are yet to be decided by the Council.

Statement

Indian Council for Cultural Relations outgoing cultural delegations

Groups sponsored abroad from Assam

S.No.	Country	Name of the group	Period	Particulars of visit
1.	Kazakhstan	Ms. Aimoni Gagoi (Bihu Groups) x 11, Guwahati,	3-9 September, 1997	to participate in the "Days of Indian Culture".
1998-99				
1.	Seychelles Reunion Islands South Africa	Hengerabari Asom Kala Kendra (Bihu Group) x 14, Guwahati	13—23 August, 1998	To give performance
2.	USA	Smt. Pushpa Bhuyan (Sattriya Dance) x 4, Guwahati	29 July— 29 August, 1998	To give performances at the invitation of the Indian-forum Utah (IFU), Salt Lake.
1999-2000				
NIL				

Passports issued under Tatkal Scheme from Bangalore Passport Office

2338. SHRI K.C. KONDAIAH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) when the Tatkal scheme for Passports was introduced and since then, how many passports have been issued by the Bangalore Passport Office under this Scheme;

(b) what fee is being charged and the time taken to issue a passport and whether the applicant himself will have to go to get the passport;

(c) if so, whether Government would take steps to issue passport to authorised person or to the travel agents; and

(d) whether there is any special counter at Bangalore Passport Office for Tatkal Scheme?